

Things

And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

Luke 12:15

We don't know the circumstance or the motive of the man who came and asked Jesus to speak to his brother so that he would divide the inheritance with him. We only know that Jesus was not interested in being an arbitrator in those family affairs, and instead took this occasion to issue this warning of misplaced values. This is added to a number of other warnings that Jesus had just issued, before the man seemingly interrupted His teaching. He then proceeded to reinforce this warning with the "parable of the rich fool," which illustrates the emptiness of riches when it comes time for a man to give an account for his soul.

Yet the very premise that Jesus lays down here is opposed by the values communicated in most of what we hear in today's culture. The desire for abundant possessions seems to be a key indicator for investors in a country's economy. Convincing people that they need more things is the central theme of a majority of the ads we hear and see. The accentuation of covetousness seems to be the norm in attempting to sell things that are really not needed. While there can be legitimacy in advertising products and services that are useful and beneficial for life, much of what surrounds us today attempts to convince us that we "deserve" more or better things. Yet, how many pillows do we really need, or how happy does a dog have to be, if it could even tell you, especially compared to opportunities to alleviate actual human suffering? Let us beware of those who would promote covetousness in our naturally selfish souls.

Jesus went on to teach contentment with God's provision of the things that He knows we need and understanding of the meaning of life beyond those essential needs. He focuses on the link between what we treasure and our heart's desire, and how both should be centered on the eternal matters of the kingdom of God. As we follow His admonition, He assures us that our heavenly Father will provide our needs. Just as He does for the birds and the flowers, He provides us legitimate means, such as strength for labor, to supply our needs and to provide for our own (I Timothy 5:8) and others (Ephesians 4:28). Let this, rather than more things, be our focus.